

ance. Second, the quality of the editing is poor: the subject index is inadequate (it does not include, for example, the crucial word 'placebo'); there is no name index; and, as mentioned previously the quality of the papers is variable. Third, the high standards of methodological sophistication demanded by the contributors are not always evident in the contributions themselves. For example, on p 36 Haynes refers to a one-tailed t test, the results of which are said to favour the conclusion that studies demonstrating no relationship between a patient's knowledge of his disease and compliance are of greater methodological soundness than those studies which found a positive relationship. Haynes not only failed to report the t value, and the associated level of probability, but also his use of a one-tailed t test was inappropriate. A re-analysis of the data, using a more appropriate test (the Mann-Whitney U test) reveals that the differences in methodological soundness are not in fact significant ($U = 12$, $P = >0.10$). The failure to quote the inter-rater reliability of the qualitative ratings in Appendix I has already been noted. Finally, the book is very expensive: £12 for less than 200 pages of text is somewhat excessive, even if one takes into account the useful appendices. In short, the topics covered in this book are of exceptional importance, and the areas of research discussed could have profound implications for clinical practice and research. However, some of the important issues raised deserve better treatment, and I would like to have seen more selective and more careful editing. The book should be on the shelves of medical school libraries but individuals who buy it may subsequently query the wisdom and worth of their purchase.

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References

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- ²Ley, P, Bradshaw, P W, Eaves, D, and Walker, C M, A method for increasing patients' recall of information presented by doctors. *Psychological Medicine*, 1973, 3, 217-220.

The Medical Risks of Life

Stephen Lock and Tony Smith
(Pp 328; 95p)

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1976.

How ceaselessly we are reminded of the medical risks of life but in a book of that title more and better co-ordinated information is presented to the intelligent layman.

The joint authors, Dr Stephen Lock and Dr Tony Smith, begin at the beginning with a discussion in chapter 1 of what they call 'life patterns'. These include such factors as illegitimacy, separation at an early age - by death, divorce, or other means - and battering. Other life patterns with which we are all endowed are our own body rhythms (the body's time clock dubbing us owls or larks), our reactions to stress and to psychosomatic illness. These are broken down and analysed for our better understanding, and upon the discussion in the whole of this first chapter we may hang our medical progress through life.

As well as chapters dealing with diet and disease and its corollary food poisoning, we are taught in others how to avoid diseases which may attack us as travellers, as pet lovers, as consumers of alcohol and of tobacco. On the positive side we are told how much exercise and sport is good for us at different ages, the hazards and benefits too of various occupations, and the dangers in our environment from not only what most of us regard as pollution but from other pollutants such as noise and even latitude, which is now being studied as a possible factor in the picture of multiple sclerosis.

Finally what are the prospects for a healthy life for our children? These are discussed in the context of the preceding chapters but certain specific topics are mentioned: prematurity and congenital abnormalities, and most importantly the

effects on children of their mothers' physical and mental health, including the quality of the mothering given to the child.

And so we come to death: those illnesses characteristic of the different ages of man are summarized in such a way that the careful reader will recall the steps by which he can avoid each as far as is in his power as outlined in the earlier chapters.

The book is written in a clear, crisp and interesting style without condescension and without jargon or a plethora of technical terms. There is a useful index, and a neat conclusion: man is a resilient creature and can survive much but also he can help himself to live to a good age in good health by digesting the facts set out by Dr Lock and Dr Smith and avoiding at least some of the medical risks of life.

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